

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject**

Legislative Policy: Alcoholic Beverage Excise Taxes

**Policy  
Number**

M-41

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**Purpose**

To establish the Board of Supervisors' legislative policy regarding enactment of alcoholic beverage excise taxes, and to provide guidance to the County's legislative representatives when advocating the County's interests to legislators, other elected officials and policy makers.

**Background**

Alcohol taxes have been differentially applied to various types of alcohol products, resulting in beer and wine being taxed at such low rates in California that they are often less costly than soft drinks or fruit juice. Alcohol taxes are based on a flat cents-per-gallon rate, rather than on sales price, and are not indexed to inflation. The result is a loss of alcohol tax revenue to the State.

The Analysis of the Economic Costs of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse in San Diego County (October 2002) indicated a total 1998 cost of alcohol and other drugs in San Diego County at \$3.9 billion. This cost includes criminal justice expenditures, substance abuse-related health conditions, core health and lost productivity costs. The combined cost of expenditures on treatment and prevention in San Diego County accounts for less than two percent of the total economic cost of alcohol and illicit drug use.

**Policy**

The legislative policy of the Board of Supervisors regarding enactment of alcohol beverage excise taxes is to:

1. Support legislation that would establish an equalized tax on beer, wine, and distilled spirits based on alcohol content using the present distilled spirits tax as a baseline.
2. Support legislation that would index alcohol excise taxes to the California Consumer Price Index stabilizing the availability of alcohol based on price and prevent the erosion of tax revenues.
3. Support legislation that would allocate alcohol excise taxes proportionally to counties, thereby assisting counties in responding to health, social, and economic costs of alcohol and other related problems.
4. Support legislation that would allocate a portion of the new generated revenue to under funded counties to help achieve equity in alcohol and other related programs.
5. Oppose legislation that would place into the constitution inadequate alcohol excise tax limits.

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6. Oppose legislation that would not guarantee a fair distribution of proceeds for counties to address alcohol related health care and law enforcement needs.

**Responsible Departments**

1. Health and Human Services Agency
2. Office of Strategy and Intergovernmental Affairs

**Sunset Date**

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12/31/07.

**References**

Board Action 3/7/84 (4)  
Board Action 2/6/90 (33)  
Board Action 4/13/99 (42A)  
Board Action 1/13/04 (13)